



Representative

Jeannie
DARNEILLE

27th District

2006 Session Report

Dear Neighbors,

Allow me to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on my work in the Legislature this year to protect and enhance the quality of life for the 27th District and for citizens across the state. Our priorities going into session were increasing access to health care, improving educational opportunities, and securing our communities.

Pressures on our state budget were largely created by federal cuts in Medicaid, mental health services, energy supports, education, civil legal services, and the implementation of Medicare Part D. Still, we passed a strong supplemental budget and planned for future challenges, putting \$2 in secure savings accounts for every additional \$1 we allocated in the budget.

I am proud to have prime-sponsored several pieces of legislation signed by the governor on issues like foster children, background checks of Metro Parks staff and volunteers, disability pensions for firefighters and police officers, and sex offender treatment providers. I am particularly proud of my work as House Democratic Caucus Vice-Chair and as a member of the Appropriations Committee. I am also very pleased that legislation I wrote to establish asset building coalitions around the state will take the success of our efforts in Pierce County to other parts of the state, helping individuals and low-income working families to increase their self-sufficiency.



I appreciate you taking the time to read my newsletter and am happy to hear from you. Your communication with me this legislative session helped guide my decisions and I encourage you to continue communicating your concerns and opinions to me. I am proud of the strong constituent services that my office provides. Many of you have expressed your appreciation to me for the work of my legislative assistant, Josephine Quiles-Negroni. Please keep in touch with us during the interim by calling our Tacoma office at (253) 593-2343. Take care!

Sincerely,

Jeannie Darneille
State Representative • 27th Legislative District

Investing in our children and local community



Investing in our children.

In 1986, I wrote the original regulations implementing the state's first early childhood education statutes – part of Governor Gardner's ambitious education agenda. Twenty years later, we've brought all the education and support programs for young children under one roof in the Department of Early Learning. Children will benefit from streamlining this fragmented service delivery system. James Baldwin once said of children, "...we will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become." We want to equip our children with the skills and support that will enable them to earn a diploma and obtain the 21st Century jobs we are working to create.



To do that, we are funding summer- and after-school programs, the voter-approved education initiatives, the Reading Foundation, expanding programs like the Running Start to support the trades, and

we are covering enrollment increases.

We are preparing our children for success by increasing access to health care for kids, with a goal to cover all Washington children by 2010. To stay on target, we enacted legislation that provides health care for an additional 73,000 previously uninsured children.

We passed laws to extend benefits for children in foster care, including extending the age at which they "age out" (to age 21 if they are still in school) so that they continue to receive support in order to succeed. I am proud that I sponsored legislation (HB 3115) to provide critical support for foster parents taking in hard-to-serve children.



Investing in Tacoma.

This session I helped secure \$4 million in funding so that the University of Washington-Tacoma could acquire land necessary to better serve our students.

Several other programs in Tacoma will be enhanced with supplemental budget funding, including the Mimms Academy serving at-risk youth, the Colored Women's Club, Wapato Lake, and Cheney Stadium.



Additional transportation projects in our region, including the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, will increase safety and decrease congestion. Services for people who suffer from mental illness will be improved. And we made significant investment in programs that help residents of Tacoma, including low-income energy assistance, new affordable housing funds, treatment of people with methamphetamine addiction, and help for low-income women over 40 who need access to life-saving breast and cervical exams and cancer treatment.



Jeannie **DARNEILLE**

State Representative • 27th District

Investing in help for low-income working families

Between 1983 and 1998, the last year for which a comparison can be made, income poverty in the U.S. declined about 16%. That's good news, until you compare that with asset poverty, which rose 14%. Today, fully one-quarter of the United States population is asset-poor. This means that, if they had to live only on their net worth - savings, home equity and other assets - they could survive at the poverty level for three months. Take away home equity, or just consider liquid assets, and the poverty rate jumps to nearly 40 percent.



For two years, I have been working with a bipartisan group of House members to examine ways the state can improve the self-sufficiency and reduce the asset poverty of low-income persons in Washington. We have learned that many eligible working families have not been applying for their federal Earned Income Tax Credit or Child Care Tax Credit, resulting in many millions of dollars lost.

In fact, several factors damage a family's ability to gain financial strength: they need financial education, access to affordable banking systems, help to avoid predatory lenders, and assistance to increase their assets. The state has already started a few programs, such as the GET (Guaranteed Education Tuition) program and the Individual Development Account program (where the state will match savings earmarked for things like home ownership).

Now, with passage of HB 3156, the state will establish a pilot program to assist low-income families to accumulate assets and to develop an outreach campaign to increase utilization of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. We hope to take the remarkable success of the newly-created Pierce County Asset Building Coalition to other parts of the state. I look forward to reporting to you about the formation of these coalitions and their work with low-income working families.

Investing in equality

After nearly three decades of consideration, we passed landmark legislation this session to end discrimination. House Bill 2661 amends the state law against discrimination to include sexual orientation.

The Legislature has sent a clear message that all residents will be treated equally in employment and housing. The legislation will result in a better business climate and ensures that the state is capable of competing in the 21st century economy.



Most importantly, ending discrimination in our state based simply on a person's sexual orientation is the right and just thing to do.

I have worked for nearly thirty years on this issue at the local and state level, and found the passage of this legislation to be a highlight of my advocacy. What a memorable day!



Governor signs HB 3156 with (left to right) Rep. Dawn Morrell, prime sponsor Rep. Jeannie Darneille, Governor Chris Gregoire, Gina Breukelman, Robin Lester, and Joan Lorenz.

Representative

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27th District



Investing in our environment

One of the major successes of the 2006 session is the creation of the Energy Freedom Fund. It is a grant and loan program for funding cleaner, alternative energy projects that will help us make a dent in our addiction to foreign oil, and create jobs for workers and opportunities for our farmers.

We also enacted legislation that will help clean up Puget Sound. Not only do we need to address current problems, we must take action to prevent further damage. Non-profit organizations are leading the charge and investing millions of dollars to protect the Sound, and we are investing \$14 million to begin clean-up.

Another growing area of pollution is a result of improving technologies. From computers



to televisions, people are upgrading at a tremendous rate, and many older models end up in our landfills. Unfortunately, e-waste, as it's called, leaks harmful chemicals that dumps aren't meant to handle. We created a program that will encourage responsible recycling without costing consumers or recyclers anything.



USDA-ARS

Keeping in Touch

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**2006
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